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EASTERN EUROPEAN INTELLIGENCER

OCI #0694/68

21 February 1968

Italy Urges Bulgaria to Induce Peace Talks

Italian Foreign Minister Fanfani has asked his Bulgarian counterpart, Ivan Bashev during the latter's 19-21 February visit to Rome, to try to bring North Vietnam to the conference table, according to a Reuter's dispatch. The two Ministers also discussed the possibilities of greater economic cooperation between the Common Market and the Eastern European states.

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COMMENT: Bashev probably is sympathetic to the idea of peace talks, but there is no reason to believe that he can convince Hanoi where others of more stature in the Communist world have failed.

Cordiality has been the keynote of Bulgarian-Italian relations during 1967. Plans have been laid for cooperative efforts in industry, agriculture, tourism and communications. The trade protocol for 1968 calls for a fifty percent increase over the 1967 volume and a direct Sofia-Rome air route agreement was signed last September. Negotiations reportedly were underway last month concerning an Italian-Bulgarian consular convention which presumably would be formalized during Bashev's Italian visit.

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Poles Sentence Alleged FRG Spies

West German citizen Eugen Schrabatke was sentenced to six and a half years, and Pole Alfred Kipper to nine years in Szczecin on 19 February for alleged hostile political activity for two West German religious organizations. During the two week trial, both men were charged with serving the interests of the FRG "revisionist" church organizations, Kirchendienst Ost and Evangelisches Hilfswerk, under the guise of helping ethnic Germans of the Evangelical faith.

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COMMENT: Both men were charged also with currency and other financial offenses, but the really damning accusation evidently was that both "encouraged the belief that the present Polish-German frontier was not permanent." Such a charge in Poland borders on treason, and helps in part to explain the longer sentence meted out to the Pole. The trial itself is

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further evidence of the vehement "vigilance" campaign conducted by hardline Polish security organs and supported by wide propaganda since the beginning of the year. [redacted]

Polish Writer Sentenced

Janusz Szpotanski, 34-year old author of an unperformed satirical operetta, was sentenced to three years on 19 February at the end of a two week long secret trial. The court charged that his work could damage the prestige of state authorities. [redacted]

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COMMENT: Szpotanski's sentence is the same as those handed down in similar cases during past years, and does not in itself represent a marked change in regime attitudes toward dissident intellectuals.

The trial, however, came at a time when Polish intellectuals and students have been emboldened by developments in Czechoslovakia on the one hand, and concerned over repressive cultural policy in the USSR on the other. Caught in the middle, the Polish dissidents are more cautious than the Czechoslovaks, but are evidently awakening from their year-long lethargy to test the regime on cultural and perhaps even political issues.

Szpotanski's trial also follows the party's closing of two controversial plays in Warsaw, actions which in one case resulted in student demonstrations. According to one unconfirmed Western press report, the Polish Writers' Union is also planning to protest the regime moves in these cases. [redacted]

South Yemen Agrees To Consular Relations With GDR

Cairo MENA reported on 19 February that the People's Republic of Southern Yemen and East Germany have agreed to "exchange diplomatic representation at the consulate level." The Foreign Ministry of South Yemen reportedly stated that the two countries took this step to consolidate their friendly relations. [redacted]

COMMENT: South Yemen thus joins the several other Arab countries which have established consular relations with the GDR. The East Germans undoubtedly have been hoping that South Yemen would agree to full diplomatic relations, but will accept the half-loaf with a certain amount of gratitude. [redacted]

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GDR Foreign Minister Reportedly in India

East German Foreign Minister Otto Winzer reportedly was in New Delhi on 19 February. According to the West German embassy here, Winzer may be involved in efforts to inject East Germany into the UN Committee for Trade and Development (UNCTAD) meeting in the Indian capital.

The Bulgarian representative to the UNCTAD conference submitted an East German memorandum to the session on 18 February outlining the GDR's "peace" policy and reiterated its "desire and demand" to become a member. Deputy Foreign Trade Minister Eugene Kattner presently is in New Delhi with the East German delegation charged with lobbying for membership.

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COMMENT: Winzer spoke in East Berlin on 16 February on the subject of the resumption of relations between Yugoslavia and West Germany. Taking the tack that the Hallstein Doctrine was dead, Winzer called upon the countries of Asia and Africa to recognize the GDR. Aside from the West German embassy source, however, we have no other indication that Winzer actually is in New Delhi.

The West German embassy in Rangoon reported that Winzer or one of his deputies will visit the Burmese capital on or about 24 February. If it comes about, the visit would be intended to offset the Kiesinger visit to Rangoon last November and, at the same time, press for the establishment of relations between the GDR and Burma in the wake of the resumption of West German-Yugoslav relations.

Gomulka Meets With Syrian Communist Leader

Party boss Gomulka met with visiting Secretary General of the Syrian Communist Party, Khalid Bakdash, on 19 February, according to a Warsaw radio announcement. The discussions, which included politburo member and ideologist Zenon Kliszko, centered on the Middle East situation and on expressions of mutual support for "anti-imperialist unity" at the "world conference" of Communist parties. Vietnam and "other problems of interest" were also touched upon, and "full agreement" was reached on all matters discussed.

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COMMENT: The meeting is another in a series of talks between the Polish and other parties prior to the Communist consultative conference scheduled to open in Budapest on 26 February. In addition, Bakdash had spent years of exile in Eastern Europe, and may be seeing those of his friends that remain prior to going to Budapest.

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